

Peace team land in Jaffna campus. (1994, October 13). *The Observer*.

• Tiger representatives welcome Govt. mission

PEACE TEAM LAND IN JAFFNA CAMPUS

By Nicholas Candappa

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS in Colombo are now awaiting progress reports from only the second official peace delegation to visit the war ravaged city of Jaffna in this 15-year ethnic conflict.

Security sources confirmed that the four-member Government delegation, led by Prime Minister's Secretary K. Balapatabendi, had reached Jaffna city by SLAF helicopter and had been received at the landing pad in the Jaffna University compound by representatives of the LTTE.

The four-member delegation is due to hold some hours of talks with an LTTE delegation at the University campus at Tirunelveli. The Government team also includes former Jaffna GA, former North-East Governor and present Information, Tourism and Aviation Ministry Secretary Lionel Fernando, Bank of Ceylon Chairman Rajan Asirwatham and private sector architect Navin Gunaratne.

The delegation is expected to be given a lavish welcome reception at the Subash

Hotel, where they will be staying the night.

Government officials in Colombo said they were expecting a first progress report from the delegation later today via the ICRC's channels of communication.

The delegation landed in an SLAF flight at about 8.20 am at Palaly air base this morning. They were accompanied by a 20-strong contingent of local and foreign journalists. The media corps will remain behind at Palaly, sources said.

Earlier this week, local and foreign journalists complained that the Ministry of

Information, Tourism and Aviation had failed to give adequate early notice that journalists were expected to make their own arrangements to proceed beyond Palaly into LTTE territory. The Government delegation was accompanied by just one photographer from the Information Department.

The delegation is due to return to Colombo tomorrow afternoon.

The first peace mission to the North took place when the then Foreign Minister A. C. S. Hameed flew to Jaffna in 1991.